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KELLOGG
SERMON

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THE NATURE, OBLIGATION AND IMPORTANCE OF
CHRISTIAN COMPASSION, ILLUSTRATED, IN

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE
MIDDLESEX LODGE,

OF
FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS,

IN
FRAMINGHAM,

ON THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF JUNE, 1796.

By DAVID KELLOGG, *K*

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN SAID TOWN.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.



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PRINTED BY THOMAS FLEET, JUN. CORNHILL.
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I EPISTLE JOHN, III CHAP. 17th VERSE.

But whoſo bath this world's good, and ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

IT is a diſtinguiſhing characteristic of the Goſpel, that it gives clear, and conſiſtent views of the perfections, and government of God; that it, reveals a ſyſtem of doctrines incomparably ſublime, perfectly pure, and with infinite wiſdom adapted to the circumſtances of man: that, it enjoins duties perfectly reaſonable; as they reſult, not ſolely in the ſovereign will of the Supreme; but neceſſarily originate in the infinite perfection of his nature, and the particular ſtanding of man, as a rational, dependent, ſocial being; and tend to exalt his nature; to render him uſeful, and happy; as an individual, a member of a particular ſociety, a citizen of the world, and a probationer for immortality.

Among many of thoſe excellent, and intereſting doctrines of chriſtianity, that, in our text is one, of eminent rank: and that is, the importance of chriſtian charity, or benevolence.

This, the Apoſtle conſiders ſo eſſential a part of the chriſtian temper, that without it, no man can
exiſt

exist a friend to God, or be supposed to exercise love to the great Author of good.

“ Who so hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ?”

This interrogation involves a strong negation. A man who cannot cordially sympathize with the afflicted, and contribute a proportion of his time, interest and talents, to a supply of the indigent, and relief of the distressed, is a stranger to that religion, the essence of which is love: neither has he experienced the power of the Gospel, which breathes benevolence.

The frequency, and persuasive eloquence by which a generous charity and tender sympathy are inculcated in the Gospel, evince the importance of those christian virtues, and suppose an occasion for a continual exercise of the noble temper.

We find the face of the moral world equally variegated, in respect to the outward circumstances, and local situation of its numerous members, as the surface of the globe on which we tread.

We see some in prosperity; others in adversity; some in affluence, others in a state of indigence.

We have high and low, rich and poor, bond and free. This always has been, and ever will be the state of the world in degree, to the conclusion of time.

The effect being uniform, and universal, demonstrates a permanent cause; which can be no less, than the unalterable establishment of heaven.

Affluence and indigence, prosperity and adversity, are by no means the result of blind chance, or contingent

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tingent fate; although, in all those instances, there is the concurring influence of natural causes; some of which operate in a measure, subordinately to human controul: Yet, in general terms, reason and revelation teach us to adore, the sovereign Providence of God, as the supreme disposing cause.

This consideration urges a perfect approbation of the present adjustment of the scale; renders profound submission indispensable; and opens a way to the exercise of those bowels of compassion insisted on in my text, as essential to the christian character.

The principal intention of my discourse will be—
In the first place—more particularly to illustrate the agency of Providence, in the diverse circumstances of mankind, and to point out the wisdom of such an establishment.

And then—to explain the nature, point out the obligation, and importance of that charity, and compassion, implicitly urged in our text.

This sacred passage supposes, that objects of compassion will be continually presenting to view, in this changing world. "Whoso seeth his brother have need." And said our Lord, "The poor ye have always with you." This declaration is the result, not of omniscience merely; but, of a just view of the establishments of nature, and an experimental acquaintance with human vicissitudes.

In these unfailing sources our Lord foresaw, that poverty and pain, wretchedness and wo, would uniformly originate.

Observation and experience, have invariably evinced the truths of the prediction.

It is a doctrine of revelation, that the diverse circumstances of men are ordered by Providence.

Says

Says Solomon—"The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all."

In contemplating the agency of Providence however, in the production of any event, we should remember, that there is the concurring influence of second causes.

In a common course, temperance produces health. Industry and oeconomy procure riches; and the contrary vices, are attended with poverty and wretchedness. This is the establishment of heaven. But still, these causes do not invariably produce their several effects.

Schemes projected with wisdom, and prosecuted with diligence, are not always crowned with success. Providence defeats our designs, and blasts our fairest prospects.

On the contrary, measures adopted with the least possible degree of policy, and pursued with a careless indifference, which forbids the most distant probability of success, are surprisingly efficacious.

Thus, riches are sometimes procured, by causes apparently inadequate to the effect; and poverty succeeds the most wisely concerted measures for avoidance. In instances thus especially remarkable the agency of Providence is peculiarly striking. They abundantly verify that memorable assertion of Solomon's, "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor yet favour to men of skill;" but such circumstances attend them, as an infinitely wise Providence pleases to appoint.

It is sometimes the case, that a man of temperance suffers the painful effects of a sickly habit, and closes the scene by an untimely death; while the licentious epicure takes his ease, and retains a firmness of body

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body to the evening of life. Thus, "they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly." Who knoweth not, that the hand of God is in all these things?" Reason assents, that there is an invisible hand, which controuls second causes with sovereign wisdom.

Although all the misery suffered in this world of trial, may be considered as the effect of human folly, in a secondary view; yet, we are pointed to Providence, as the wisely controuling cause.

Human policy and power are as perfectly unable to effect a compleat equality in the circumstances, and means of enjoyment, in respect to the moral world, as they are to reduce the globe to a plane. The unalterable laws of nature forbid the attempt.

The widely different circumstances of men, as well as their diverse local situations evince, that the rich, and the poor, the comfortable liver, and the perfectly indigent, are scattered through society, by a sovereign Providence.

Such is the territorial lot of some, that, indefatigable industry, and rigid œconomy, can promise nothing higher, than a bare subsistence; even if Providence should secure them from uncommon disasters.

A seemingly trifling disaster, immediately throws them upon the charity of society.

In respect to others, whatever may be their local situation, although they are stationed in a place, where a luxuriant soil, and advantageous commerce, render an affluent living of the easiest attainment possible; for want of a capacity to improve, or so much as enjoy the bounties of nature, they pine, and even starve in the midst of plenty.

Such is the state of the world; of course, we must expect objects of charity continually presenting in view.

In this, apparently, unequal adjustment of the scale, we may discover obvious marks of wisdom and goodness.

In the construction of the natural world, the Supreme Architect has ordained variety; which is justly deemed the beauty of creation:

There are bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial. Of each of those species of bodies there is an almost infinite variety. One excels another in point of lustre, and importance. Says the Apostle, "One star differeth from another star in glory." There is one glory of the sun; another glory of the moon; and another glory of the stars."

We behold a sun, and a glow worm; a star of the first magnitude, and a fleeting meteor; a pearl, and a pebble.

To view such a wisely contrived variety, such regular gradations, and striking contrasts in the natural world, is peculiarly pleasing to a contemplative mind, and gives exalted views of the unsearchable wisdom of the adorable Creator.

A similar arrangement, as it respects certain purposes, may be deemed a display of wisdom in the moral world. Different capacities, diverse local situations, various degrees of property and power, reason and experience attest are essential, to the order and happiness of the universal whole.

Various ranks of intelligencies exist in the heavenly world, where there is the brightest possible display of the wisdom, and goodness of the Creator, and Ruler of all.

But,

But, in respect to objects of real misery, whom we behold in the world, equally deserving of ease, with others who swim in pleasure; our feelings are reconciled to the painful prospect, by a consideration, of the immutable rectitude of the supreme Disposer of events; and by a firm belief, that, the present is only a state of trial, preparatory to a better; in which the mysteries of Providence will be unfolded to the view of admiring worlds.

We may further observe—that, a view of poverty and distress serves to enkindle grateful sentiments in those, who are in ease and affluence; to awaken their bowels of compassion, and call into exercise that charity and benevolence which christianity inspires, and inculcates upon all, as ornamental to a christian, and well pleasing to God.

Agreeably to the order of my discourse, I will now attempt an illustration of the nature, obligation and importance of this christian virtue urged in our text.

The Apostle uses neither of the terms, love, charity or benevolence, but compassion; this is the same virtue, under a different form, suited to the particular case which calls forth its exercise.

Benevolence, charity, candour, a forgiving temper, and sympathetic compassion, are all comprised in the term love; and are nothing more, than this one comprehensive principle, appearing in different forms, and adjusted to different circumstances, persons, and things.

Love, when denoting general good will, is termed benevolence. When it involves delight in any particular object, and a desire for connection with it, on account of its apparent merit, or intrinsic excellence, it is complacence.

When

When importing a disposition to a most favourable construction of the words and actions of others, it is candour. When it intends an inclination, or actually generous contribution to the relief of the necessitous, it is beneficence. When manifesting itself in a tender sympathy with objects in misery, and solicitude for their relief, it is compassion. In this view of the heaven-born principle, the Apostle, in our text, terms it, bowels of compassion.

In my present discourse, I shall not confine myself to this particular form of love, as displaying itself only in a tender feeling for objects in misery; but shall allow myself the latitude prescribed above.

It is of importance, carefully to observe—that, love, charity, or compassion, may be considered in two different points of view; either as a natural instinctive principle, or as a christian virtue.

By instinct is here intended, a propension in the creature, to certain actions adapted to his nature, without a sense of duty upon his mind, or regard to the honor and authority of God. This instinctive principle of charity, or benevolence, however deficient as to motive, or end, when viewed in the light of christianity, has its use, and is of singular importance in society. Without it, man would cease to be a social being.

The great Author of nature has interwoven this principle in the human constitution, for wise reasons, and will overrule it to purposes of present importance; although, he will not finally crown it with immortality.

Of a much higher nature, and more noble complexion, is that benevolent compassion urged in our text, by an Apostle divinely inspired.

In this sacred passage, as well as in other parts of the Gospel, it is considered as a christian virtue; originating in a sense of duty to God, and respect to his honour; and tending in its exercises especially towards his children; for this important reason; because, they bear his image, and are members of Christ.

The Apostle, with a freedom and boldness, becoming an ambassador of Christ, declares the most pompous services performed upon any principle inferior to the above, or the most painful and expensive obligations to society, destitute of the essential nature of a christian duty, and of course a nullity, in the view of the all-perfect Judge.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and Angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal." "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and have not charity, I am nothing." "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, and have not charity, I am nothing."

By charity, here, is intended evangelical love; as appears from the following passage—"Now abideth faith, hope, charity; these three; but the greatest of these is charity." True love is the grace which bears this distinguishing rank; because, it renders the subject more like God; and will be a predominant principle in the heavenly world, to an interminable eternity; while, faith and hope, are swallowed up, in vision and enjoyment.

This charity is to be exercised especially, towards the children of God; who, in the Gospel are stiled brethren. The Gospel in our text speaks of withholding charitable assistance from a brother, in particular, as an evidence of the absence of a christian temper,

Paul

Paul exhorts the Galatian converts to do good unto all men, especially to the household of faith.

True christians are the excellent of the earth, as they bear the image of God; are faithful in the cause of God, and zealous advocates for the best interest of men.

Individuals, or a society of this happy character, are with the highest reason proposed, as primary objects of our tenderest affections, and complacential regards.

But, we are not confined to the christian family, in our benevolent wishes. Particular societies with which we are connected, by some peculiar bonds, have a right to a special share of our attention, and friendly assistance. Those, to whom we are allied by consanguinity, reason and christianity point to our view as objects of particular regard.

Partial connections are necessary, in the present imperfect state. The great family cannot sit in the same circle; but is unavoidably formed into detached parts; each select portion can best attend to their own improvement; each member can best know the wants of his own body, and supply them; can feel their burdens, and administer to their support under them, or relief from them. The wants of the great whole cannot fall under particular observation; neither can there be a mutual converse through so extensive a body.

Particular societies therefore, for the purposes of cultivating the social affections, diffusing knowledge, and promoting the happiness of a select few, are founded in reason, expedience, and even necessity. At the same time, a love of benevolence is due to being in general. "Let us do good unto all men," is an injunction of christianity. Equally extensive is that compassion urged in our text.

It

It involves no less, than good will to all, a tender regard to the best interest of mankind, and cheerful exertions to promote the happiness of all within the sphere of our influence. It imparts a real participation of the joys and sorrows of our fellow men; that we pity the afflicted, and endeavour to relieve them; that we are concerned for the erroneous, and wish to reclaim them; that we feel for the indigent, and cheerfully contribute a reasonable supply; that we are placable to our enemies, and ready for reconciliation; that we can forget personal injuries, and forgive them. In a word—it involves a disposition to communicate happiness in a way which reason approves, and upon motives which christianity urges, and inspires.

Thus extensive, and sublime, is that christian compassion recommended in our text.

These observations open a way to an illustration of its obligation, and importance.

To exercise this heavenly temper, renders a man as near a resemblance of God, as humanity will admit. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

By this most forcible argument, christian charity is urged by our blessed Lord, upon his dear disciples. "I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise, on the evil, and on the good."

Thus by exercising a diffusive benevolence, towards the unworthy, and a love of complacency to the truly amiable, we imitate God, and give the brightest possible display of an heavenly temper. In this view, christians are exhorted to be perfect, as their Father in heaven is perfect.

The

The repeated injunctions of sacred scripture, further, render the cultivation, and exercise of this christian virtue indispensibly binding.

Even, under the comparatively dark, and partial dispensation of the law, humanity and compassion were as repeatedly urged, and cogently enforced, as any of the direct duties of devotion. Yea, under both dispensations, positive and ritual duties, are held in subordination to those, of the moral and social kind. Said God in reference to the ritual services of his people of old—"bring no more vain oblations; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow." Similar to this, is that reply made by our blessed Lord, to the cavilling Pharisees—"Go ye, and learn what that meaneth; I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." And the apostle Peter exhorts christians to love as brethren.

The same sublime virtue is urged upon the Colossian converts, with the most persuasive eloquence. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God holy, and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another.

Of so eminent a rank is this virtue in our text, that it is considered as essential to the christian character. The man who is destitute of bowels of compassion for the distressed, is a stranger to religion, an enemy to God.

Equally important, and indispensable, does this virtue appear, from that relation, and mutual dependence subsisting, between the numerous members of the great family of man.

If we confine our views to christians, they are of the same nature, in a spiritual view, born from above; begotten

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begotten to the same lively hope ; have one common Lord ; are engaged in one cause, and are all tending to the same glorious end. Unity and love, and the tenderest affection, ought of course, to pervade the whole body.

A relation in a natural, and civil respect, between the numerous members of the human race, calls for the exercise of the same virtue throughout the whole.

However diverse the complexion, capacities, tempers, interest, and manners of men, they are all descended from one common progenitor ; and of course have the same nature. Says the great Apostle—“God hath made of one blood, all flesh to dwell on the earth.” To love as brethren then, is a duty resulting from the constitution of nature.

We may further consider—that throughout the whole human family, there is a similarity of passions, of weakness and infirmity ; The same real dangers, and imaginary evils ; the same natural foibles, and moral depravity ; which constitution necessitates a mutual interchange of charitable offices, bowels of compassion, friendly forbearance, candid allowances, and favourable constructions.

The cultivation, and exercise of this christian spirit, lay the only permanent basis of civil peace, and social happiness.

Sordid passions are the baneful source of anarchy, and war, and of all that wretchedness and wo, which are the unhappy lot of mortality.

In the last place, I observe—that the refined pleasures resulting from the sublime affections, which christianity inculcates, and inspires, further evince their importance, and afford a persuasive argument to the cultivation, and exercise of them.

Unholy passions create a painful ferment in the mind, which renders a man like a troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

But the christian virtues inspire a solid peace; a peace, resulting from conscious conformity to principles of reason and religion, and a consequent prospect of immortality.

Thus, amiable, extensively useful, and highly important, are those social virtues recommended in the Gospel; a comprehensive branch of which is involved in that tender compassion, urged in our text.

The man, who lives in the exercise of this christian love, and compassion, is a favourite of heaven, and the best friend to man. A contrary character, is an enemy to God, to himself, to his country, and the world.

Are christian charity, diffusive benevolence, and bowels of compassion, of so amiable a nature, and singular importance? every good man wishes to see them promoted in every possible way; and will approve of any institution, human, or divine, which he is convinced is adapted to the laudable design.

Upon this principle, the religion of the Gospel is cordially embraced, and its institutions revered, by the really wise and truly good.

For a similar reason, principles of Masonry, so far as I have been able to collect information, from authentic documents, merit approbation. For they involve the moral, and social virtues, so clearly explained, and cogently enforced in the Gospel of Christ.

I find that a Mason is sacredly bound, to an uniform observance of the same duties to God, himself, his neighbour, and to man, which the religion of nature,

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ture and revelation unitedly enforce. He is bound "to fear God, love the brotherhood, and honour all men." In respect to God, he is required "to look to him, as the chief good;" and "to speak of his name, with reverence, and awe." In regard to his neighbour, he is obliged "to act upon the square;" (i. e.) "to do to others, as he would that others should do to him." Relative to himself, "a Mason is bound "to avoid every species of irregularity, and intemperance, unbecoming the dignity of human nature." Especially is he obliged, "to practice benevolence, and charity."

These I conceive, to be some of the distinguishing characteristics of this ancient, and honourable institution.

Its antiquity is indisputable. That, it deserves the appellation of honourable, an appeal to its principles as above, may evince.

To the honour of the institution, it may be further observed—that, some of the most dignified characters, patrons of science, friends to their country, and to man, have graced the Fraternity, by joining their number, and submitting to their discipline.

We may add—in honour to the Society, that, the numerous ages, through which it has existed, have not been able to produce any higher charges against it, than may with equal propriety, be alledged against any other order of defectible creatures.

In no instance, perhaps, has the Institution been proved an obstruction, to civil, ecclesiastical, or social happiness.

I will hazard a presumption, that, many of the great human family have experienced its beneficial effects.

Are

Are not these reasons sufficient, if not to induce approbation, yet, to forbid censure?

That Masons do, in numerous instances, counteract their profession, and essentially deviate from their excellent principles, like every other Denomination, is undoubtedly true.

Nevertheless, their theory may merit approbation; while their practice deserves censure,

Principles are founded in nature, and exist, independently of practice.

Were the world to judge of christianity by the conduct of its professors, they might be justified in rejecting it, as, unworthy of God to reveal, and unfit for man to receive.

In respect to christianity however, every man has the system before him; that, he may judge of its merits, independently of the practice of its professors.

But, Masonry, is mostly a secret to the world. But few have any knowledge of its principles; so, that the multitude are obliged to found their sentiments of its theory, upon the deportment of the Fraternity.

This, ought to serve, as a powerful motive, with every masonic society, to an uniform exhibition, of those moral, social, and christian virtues, which are the ornament of human nature, and will infallibly secure publick approbation, and private esteem.

Peculiarly important is it, that, this argument should have a practical influence, upon the newly constituted Lodge in this Town. For it is now in its infancy; and is here, a novelty.

Various opinions are formed respecting it. Some suppose it to be of an evil tendency: others may think

think it of no use to society; and some consider it a matter of indifference.

Which of these conjectures are founded in truth, your conduct, Gentlemen, will decide.

Let the solemn charges in your book of constitutions be observed; and the principles of the Order reduced to practice; sure I am, that you may shine, as the ornaments of civil society.

In the language of an inspired Apostle let me exhort you—"to walk circumspectly; not as fools but as wise."

A sense of duty, and regard to the reputation of the Institution, will induce a cautious inspection of the character of those, whom you admit into your Fraternity.

These motives will likewise operate to a strict observation of temperance, sobriety, and decorum, in all your assemblies, as well as in your general intercourse with the world.

You will not forget to observe seasonable hours in your meetings; remembering that family religion is not to be neglected.

The eminently good, in all ages of the world, have considered this, an important branch of social duty; and have not failed to pay a devout regard to its obligation.

To see its neglect sanctioned by a society, will not fail to cast an indelible blot upon their character.

You will allow me to observe—that it will not be altogether unimportant for this, and other detached portions

portions of the great Masonic Fraternity, to caution the young, and less informed members, against a fond indulgence, in rapturous encomiums upon the sublime mysteries of Masonry : As if, in that system, every scattering ray, leading to a knowledge of truth, were collected to a point.

Such empty suggestions, a man of reason and information, ever views with a benevolent contempt.

Finally, my friends—whatever may be your proficiency in masonry, keep in view the infinite importance of Gospel piety.

Prayerfully study, and uniformly practice the art of holy living.

A speculative acquaintance with this heavenly art, may be acquired by human exertion : but, an experimental knowledge of things Divine, christianity obliges us to consider the result of spiritual illumination.

Religion lays the only foundation of present peace, or future felicity. Its essence consists, not, in lifeless speculations, which only enkindle enthusiastic raptures ; but, in inward purity and love.

The sublime pleasures, resulting from this principle, of heavenly extract, are a profound secret to the world ; a secret, never taught, but in the school of Christ ; entrusted to none, but followers of the Lamb.

Said our Lord—" I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." The Evangelist informs us—that " the sheep follow Christ, for they know his voice, but a stranger will they not follow."

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follow." Here are tokens, by which, a christian will find admission into the New Jerusalem, the city of the Living God.

The grand token is, the christian temper : a practical faith, which triumphs over the world.

To him that overcometh, will I grant to eat of the hidden manna ; and I will give him a white stone ; and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it..

So be it LORD—ALLELUIA,

A M E N.



...are to be, by which a Christian will
...into the New Testament, the way of
the Living God.

The grand token is, the Christian temper; a pure
heart, which triumphs over the world.

To him that overcometh, will I grant to eat of the
hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone;
and in the stone a new name written, which no man
knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.

So be it Lord—Amen.

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